

NOAA Research Council Terms of Reference

*NOAA Research Council Executive Secretariat
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Purpose:

This document defines the mission, responsibilities, authorities, and processes of the NOAA Research Council.

Mission:

The mission of the NOAA Research Council is to ensure all NOAA research and development (R&D) activities are strategically managed across NOAA to fulfill the Agency's science mission and improve its service and stewardship missions in accordance with NOAA's corporate vision, goals, objectives, and priorities. The purview of the NOAA Research Council is the conduct and management of R&D (both conducted and funded), as defined in NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 216-115. This includes issues of oversight and policy to ensure that NOAA R&D activities are of the highest scientific quality, meet near- to long-term NOAA mission requirements and societal needs, take advantage of emerging scientific and technological opportunities, shape a forward-looking research agenda, and are accomplished in an efficient and cost-effective manner. The decision to address topics outside of this scope may be made by the Chair of the Council.

Council Roles and Responsibilities:

To accomplish its mission, the Council develops and maintains corporate R&D planning and policy guidance, as needed, and it oversees the implementation of existing R&D documents.

The NAO on Strengthening NOAA's R&D Enterprise (NAO 216-115) guides NOAA's R&D decisions through a regular cycle of R&D planning, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. The NAO on Scientific Integrity (NAO 202-735D) ensures the integrity of scientific activities the Agency conducts and uses to inform management and policy decisions. The Council, through its Research and Development Enterprise Committee, ensures the guidance in these NAO documents is widely communicated and followed across the Agency. Through its committee of Line Office Transition Managers, the Council supports NOAA's processes for identifying and transitioning research results to applications, as per NAO 216-105, Policy on Transition of Research to Application.

Through regular briefings from NOAA program and science staff, the Council keeps abreast of priorities and new developments in R&D inside and outside of NOAA. It then translates this perspective into strategic advice for NOAA Senior Management. The Chair updates the NOAA Chief Scientist regularly on activities and issues of concern for NOAA's R&D enterprise, and the Council coordinates with the NOAA Office of the Chief Scientist on actions or decisions requiring a report to, or approval from, the NOAA Executive Council. Finally, the Council provides a forum

for the coordination of views in matters of R&D where shared accountability exists and/or where many NOAA offices are involved.

In fulfilling these roles and responsibilities, the Council specifically does the following:

Policy

- Formulates and recommends policy to strengthen NOAA science and science infrastructure and provides guidance on scientific and technological issues to the NEC
- Oversees corporate policy on scientific integrity, including maintenance of the Scientific Integrity Commons website, ensuring availability of scientific integrity training, and periodic reviews and updates of the NOAA Scientific Integrity Policy ¹
- Oversees corporate policy for planning, monitoring, reporting, and evaluating NOAA's R&D²
- Develops and oversees corporate guidance and timelines for the internal review of Fundamental Research Communications
- Oversees corporate policy for State-of-the-Science (SoS) Fact Sheets, and manages new and existing SoS Fact Sheets on the Council website
- Formulates and recommends policy supporting the development of NOAA's scientific workforce

Management

- Oversees existing Cooperative Institutes through its Cooperative Institute Committee, and recommends new requests for Cooperative Institutes to the NOAA Administrator
- Reviews the NOAA Science Advisory Board (SAB) charter and recommends changes to the NOAA Administrator
- Oversees and approves tasking and core funding for selected activities of the National Academy of Sciences' Boards
- Oversees the administration of the Presidential Early Career Awards for Scientists and Engineers for NOAA, working with the Council of NOAA Fellows
- Supports communication and coordination with the NOAA SAB
- Nurtures science in NOAA by recommending scientific needs are given appropriate priority in Agency documents

¹ The Council has administrative responsibility for the NOAA Administrative Order on Scientific Integrity (NAO 202-735D) and the Scientific Integrity Commons website (<http://www.nrc.noaa.gov/scientificintegrity.html>).

²The Council has administrative responsibility for the NAO on Strengthening NOAA's Research and Development Enterprise (NAO 216-115).

- Promotes consistent interpretation of the definition of R&D across NOAA
- Nurtures coordination of social science activities across NOAA's Science and Technology Enterprise through its Social Science Committee
- Convenes NOAA-wide science meetings and other forums as needed to further strengthen NOAA science and support R&D planning

Planning

- Oversees development of a 5-Year R&D Plan (consistent with NOAA's NGSP and Implementation Plans) in coordination with all NOAA LOs³
- Oversees development of a 20-Year R&D Vision in coordination with all NOAA LOs
- Contributes to the implementation of the Strategy Execution and Evaluation (SEE) process⁴ by informing the Holistic Understanding Enterprise Objective and providing a forum for coordination of views and review for the R&D components of all NOAA Implementation Plans. The Council may request formal briefings from appropriate parties as these plans are developed⁵
- Provides a forum for discussion, arbitration, and evaluation of NOAA science and science policy, including new science initiatives and cross-LO science agreements
- Ensures capabilities of NOAA's partners are fully represented in NOAA's R&D planning

Monitoring

- Monitors performance of NOAA R&D using an enterprise R&D database
- Monitors implementation and progress of NOAA R&D policies and strategic plan
- Tracks external reviews of NOAA's R&D and informs the NOAA Chief Scientist regarding which components of NOAA's R&D have, and have not, had timely periodic external reviews
- Monitors NOAA cross-LO R&D activities (matrix programs), including Ocean Acidification, Unmanned Aircraft Systems, Corals, and Environmental Modeling⁶

³ The plan will identify the overarching R&D challenges for NOAA, as well as a set of objectives and milestones for moving the agency towards addressing those challenges. The 5-Year Plan is a public document, which the Council owns on behalf of NOAA, and the Chair presents to the NEC.

⁴ The Research Council has planning and other responsibilities defined in the NAO on Strategy Execution and Evaluation: NOAA's Performance Management System (NAO 216-111).

⁵ The plan will identify the overarching R&D challenges for NOAA, as well as a set of objectives and milestones for moving the agency towards addressing those challenges. The 5-Year R&D Plan is a public document, which the Council owns on behalf of NOAA, and the Chair presents to the NEC.

⁶ The Council is responsible for approving the charters for these activities, including the composition of the executive oversight board for each program. At least annually, the Council will review progress and will verify whether the charters and oversight boards continue to meet the needs of these activities.

Evaluation

- Oversees development and implementation of policy on evaluation of NOAA's R&D enterprise
- Oversees development and implementation of corporate R&D evaluation policy, identifying criteria and processes for reviews of all R&D programs using the NOAA SAB and other appropriate mechanisms
- Oversees development and implementation of policy on reporting of performance measures for R&D to advance science quality and safeguard scientific integrity
- Evaluates NOAA's R&D portfolio balance and progress on priorities relative to the NOAA R&D Plan, to inform NOAA's Annual Guidance Memorandum, Implementation Plan revisions, and future NOAA R&D Plans
- Reviews R&D enterprise to determine if activities are directed to applications that support broader mission goals of maximizing societal benefits and addressing societal needs
- Reviews significant LO performance reviews (e.g., laboratory and program reviews), recognizing outstanding reviews and highlighting potential concerns for LO and/or NOAA leadership attention
- Coordinates benchmarking reviews with the NOAA SAB and works with the SAB to support NOAA science and research activities
- Evaluates R&D efforts through the use of performance metrics

Reporting

- Oversees development of and delivers annual *State of NOAA Research* report to the NEC
- Provides strategic advice concerning the R&D Portfolio to the NEC
- Develops and delivers the Portfolio Review Report, per NAO 216-115
- Provides high-level reports on NOAA R&D and science policy activities of note to the NEC
- Ensures R&D performance reporting complies with Department of Commerce and Congressionally-mandated requirements

Membership:

Chair:	Appointed by NOAA Chief Scientist
Vice-Chair:	Appointed by Chair
Executive Secretariat:	Assigned by Chair

The Research Council is a high-level advisory and coordinating body that reports to the NOAA Executive Council through the NOAA Chief Scientist. Assistant Administrators (AAs) of each of NOAA's LOs and the Director responsible for NOAA's fleet and aircraft assets shall appoint a member to the NOAA Research Council to represent their office's perspective on the R&D interests of NOAA. This person will be the chief science advisor for those offices having such a position, or a person with a comparable role in the office. Members shall be authorized to make policy and strategic decisions and speak on behalf of their office's leadership, particularly in the capacity of coordinating across offices to plan, monitor, evaluate, and report R&D.

The Research Council representative should closely coordinate with the AA, Strategic Planning Director, and Chief Financial Officer for their office. Principal and Advisory Members (or their designees) will constitute the core of the Council's regular attendees.

Principal Members:

In addition to the Chair and Vice Chair, Principal Members will include representatives from the following:

- Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR)
- National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)
- National Ocean Service (NOS)
- National Weather Service (NWS)
- National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service (NESDIS)
- Program, Planning, and Integration (PPI)
- Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO)

AAs and the OMAO Director should review their representation on the Council annually to ensure the best fit. If a Principal Member is unable to attend a meeting, an alternate shall be sent with full authority to act on behalf of the Principal Member.

Advisory Members:

- NOAA Strategy Leads for Goals and Enterprise Objectives
- Council of NOAA Fellows Representative
- NOAA Science Advisory Board Executive Director
- Cooperative Institutes Committee Chair
- Research and Development Enterprise Committee Chair
- Social Science Committee Chair
- Line Office Transition Managers Committee Chair

- NOAA Chief Financial Officer
- NOAA Chief Information Officer
- NOAA Observing Systems Council (NOSC) Liaison
- NOAA Oceans and Coasts Council (NOC-C) Liaison

Advisory roles may be fulfilled by a Principal Member if a Principal Member holds an Advisory Member position specified above. Advisory Members may also appoint designees to serve in their stead.

Other Meeting Attendees:

Research Council meetings are open. Relevant staff from LOs and implementation planning teams are encouraged to attend Council meetings to express their views and support/advise Principal Members.

Committees:

The Research Council may form standing and ad hoc committees to achieve specific tasks. Such committees may include persons who are not members of the Research Council, but the Research Council shall include at least one Council member (may be a Principal or Advisory Member) on all committees.

Committee Chairs are *ex officio* Advisory Members of the Research Council and will attend all Research Council meetings or appoint a designee to do so. Committees will develop their own Terms of Reference based on requirements outlined by the Council. Terms of Reference for committees must be approved by the Council. The Research Council may terminate ad hoc committees at will, and it may terminate standing committees by majority vote of the Council.

The Research Council has four standing committees:

1. Research and Development Enterprise Committee (Focuses on strengthening NOAA's science enterprise through effective planning, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting)
2. Cooperative Institutes (CI) Committee (Focuses on ensuring compliance with the NOAA Policy on Cooperative Institutes (NAO 216-107))
3. Social Sciences Committee (Focuses on strengthening, coordinating, and integrating NOAA's social science research and analysis capabilities)
4. Line Office Transition Managers Committee (Focuses on fostering, tracking, and reporting on transitions of research to applications).

The Terms of Reference for each Committee are available on the Research Council website at <http://nrc.noaa.gov>.

Meetings, Council Management, and Coordination:

Council meetings are generally held twice a month, or as needed, and are scheduled for two hours per meeting. Attendance by a majority of the Principal Council members (or their alternates) will constitute a quorum needed for decisional briefings. Video teleconference and teleconference capabilities are routinely available, and participation via these technologies constitutes full attendance. In-person participation is expected when feasible. The Research Council Executive Secretariat manages and maintains content on the Research Council website (<http://nrc.noaa.gov>) and the Council's intranet site. All meeting minutes and official (approved) Council decisions and documents are stored and maintained on the intranet site, along with current and past Council actions and upcoming meeting dates. Typically, meeting materials are posted to the Council intranet no later than the Thursday prior to a meeting.

Council Committees maintain content on their respective websites and intranet.

Decision-Making Process:

The Council, with the support of Council staff, Committees, and Line and Staff Offices, will collect and analyze information to support its recommendations and its oversight responsibilities. Topics brought to the Council for consideration must be sponsored by a Principal or Advisory Member.

Most decisions will be accomplished informally through informed consensus. The Chair will strive for consensus on every issue. Whether or not there is consensus, the Chair will submit each decisional issue to a vote of the Principal Members. Notwithstanding a vote of the Principals, the Chair maintains 51 percent of the vote and has final decision-making authority when consensus is not achieved. Principal Members may also move for a formal roll call vote on any decisional item for the record.

Terms of Reference Revision Process:

The Council will review this document every two years or at the request of the Chair to ensure continued accuracy and utility. Based on the recommendation of the Chair, the Council Executive Secretariat will make revisions to the document as appropriate. The Chair will approve the Terms of Reference for a decisional briefing to the Council. Once approved by the Council, the final Terms of Reference must be approved by the NEC to enter into effect.